



## Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

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### **Gov. Pritzker Announces \$4 Million in Grant Funding for Projects Along the Historic Route 66**

*Leading up to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Route 66, \$4 million in grant funding will bridge the past, present and future by promoting preservation and education, with an eye toward future tourism trends*

**SPRINGFIELD** - Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today announced a new \$4 million grant program for the development of tourism, education, preservation, and promotion of the 100th Anniversary of Route 66. With more than 300 miles of Route 66 in Illinois from its starting point in Chicago to the Chain of Rocks Bridge, Route 66's economic and historical impact is woven into the fabric of communities across the state. This grant opportunity – which is open to Illinois' Certified Conventions and Visitors Bureaus - will help develop or enhance sites along Route 66, while prioritizing projects focused on future transportation and tourism trends such as electric vehicles.

“Route 66 is nearly 100 years old and as we prepare to celebrate its historic centennial, I can't think of a better way to honor its cultural contribution than preserving and promoting it for generations to come,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “Whether recipients improve sites to be accessible for electric vehicles or breathe new life into beloved roadside attractions, this funding opportunity will help support communities along Route 66.”

Route 66 is one of the most famous roads in America, and it serves as an important historical and cultural symbol. Route 66 was designated in 1926 as part of the new numbered highway network and grew to be one of the most well-known and travelled highways. The construction of Route 66 helped make the Western part of the United States accessible to anyone with a car, while generating economic benefits for many communities along the Route.

This funding opportunity supports the development of tourism, education, preservation, and promotion of Route 66, while also preparing it to meet the needs of future travelers. As our transportation sector evolves to include more electric vehicles (EVs), it is critical to embrace future trends and promote the state's tourism areas as EV destinations in order to unlock all Route 66 has to offer. In support of this, the

application prioritizes projects that are focused on promoting future tourism trends, such as electric vehicles.

“For almost 100 years, Route 66 has been where an iconic Illinois road trip begins, today’s announcement gives local tourism bureaus the opportunity to celebrate that history and make investments to cement its legacy well into the future,” **said Sylvia I. Garcia, Acting Director of DCEO.**

“Route 66 has been a vital job creator for the Joliet area and the entire state for nearly a century, and that is worth celebrating,” **said Rep. Larry Walsh (D-Joliet).** “As a member of the Route 66 Centennial Commission, I know that our partners at the Convention and Visitor Bureaus will be ready and able to brighten attractions, improve navigation and get the Mother Road in top shape for its 100th birthday.”

“The Capital Region contains so much rich history and Route 66 is one of the brightest gems” **said Rep. Tim Butler (R-Springfield).** “I look forward to seeing great projects come from this opportunity, which will enhance the visitor experience for everyone that comes to explore Route 66 and the Land of Lincoln.”

“Route 66 is an international destination with visitors traveling through our small towns to experience the nostalgia and Americana that can only be found on the Mother Road,” **said Cory Jobe, Chair of the Illinois Centennial Commission.** “2026 is the centennial year of Route 66. Promoting, preserving and planned development of the rich history of the road is essential if we want to tell our story to the world. I support Gov. Pritzker’s efforts to draw attention to this economic corridor from Chicago to the Chain of Rocks Bridge.”

Priorities for projects include:

- Projects that are statewide in nature and benefit the entire Illinois portion of Route 66 from Chicago to Chain of Rocks Bridge.
- Projects that develop new or enhance existing attractions that elevate the Route 66 experience in Illinois.
- Projects that support improved navigation for visitors traveling Route 66; and
- Projects that strengthen future tourism trends that include electric vehicles.

Through a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), Certified Conventions and Visitors Bureaus can submit an application until March 7, 2022. To view the NOFO, please visit <https://bit.ly/3ojjDFp>

For regular updates on funding opportunities and resources available for businesses and communities, please visit the DCEO website and follow us on social media [@IllinoisDCEO](https://twitter.com/IllinoisDCEO).

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